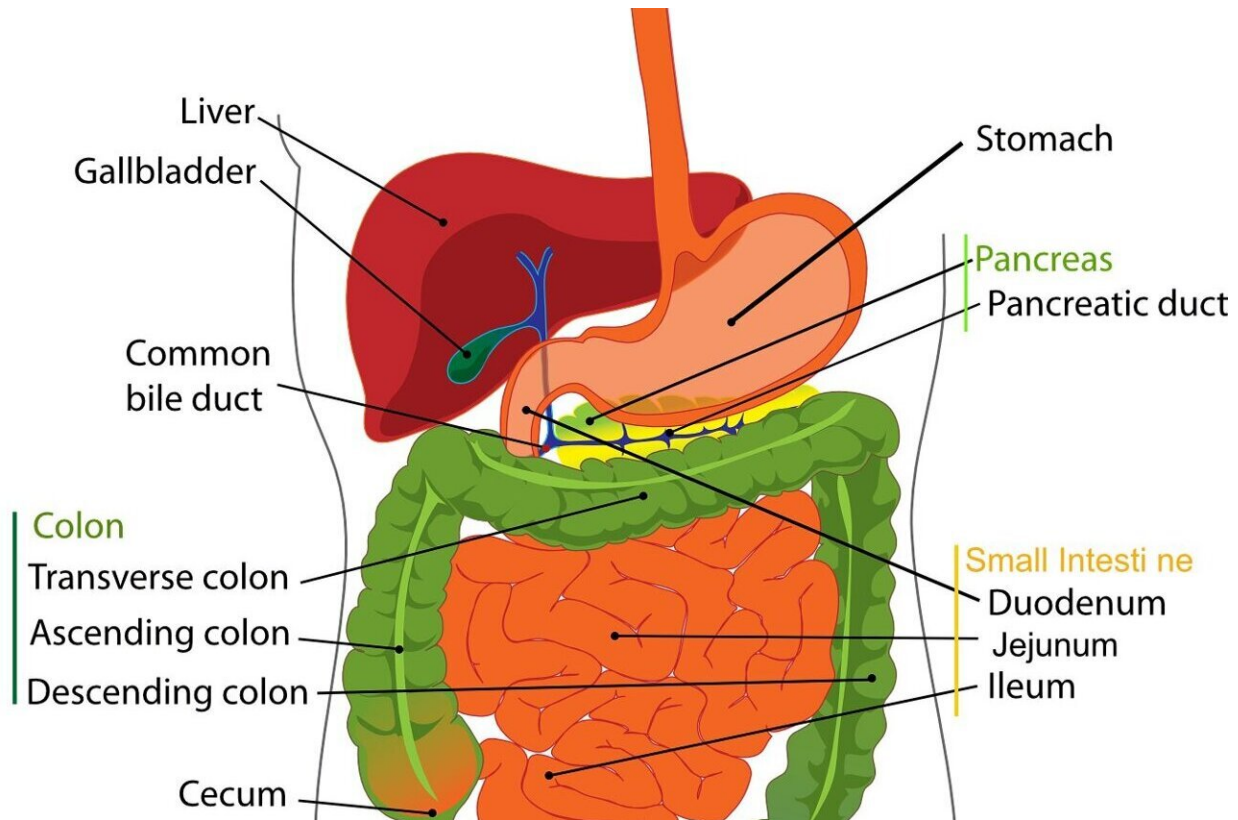


Video: What are gallstones?

May 6 2024, by Jason Howland



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Gallstones are hardened deposits of digestive fluid, called bile, in your gallbladder. They range in size from as small as a grain of sand to as large as a golf ball.

Dr. Irving Jorge, a Mayo Clinic general surgeon, says people who

experience pain and other symptoms from gallstones usually require [gallbladder](#) removal surgery.

You experience sudden, intense pain in your abdomen or back pain between your shoulder blades—maybe even nausea or vomiting. You could have gallstones.

"Typically, symptoms of gallbladder-related pain is pain associated with meals. Usually after you eat meals with [fatty foods](#)," says Dr. Jorge.

He says there are several reasons why your gallbladder can form gallstones. The most common cause is what you eat. A diet high in fiber and low in cholesterol and fat will reduce your risk.

"Native Americans and Hispanic populations have a higher risk of developing gallstones and so do women. And as we get older, we're at higher risk of developing gallstones," says Dr. Jorge.

He says, once you have [gallstones](#), they won't go away on their own. Recommended treatment is surgery to remove your gallbladder.

"It's an organ that people can live without and not have any long-term consequences from," says Dr. Jorge. "We take out the gallbladder not just because it has stones, but it's because it's where most stones are formed. But there is a small percentage of patients that can develop stones within the bile ducts themselves."

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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